

SUPPLEMENTINDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY

/from a series of articles entitled "From London to Moscow" by Marcelli Karczewski, former editor of the "Polish Daily", who accompanied Prime Minister Mikolajczyk on his recent visit to the USSR./

In Moscow one begins to think of the rest of the world as almost another world - rather unreal, and in any case far away. "Things are as they seem to us" - this is the principle on which points-of-view about the world seem to be formed in Russia, formed as the press desires. This even affects the views of foreigners to a certain degree, not to mention Soviet public opinion.

During our stay the press kept up its references to "reactionary Poles, hostile to Russia," in Poland itself and particularly in London. Soviet propaganda has long followed the line of hunting out enemies rather than friends, and it is hard to resist the impression that this has created an atmosphere of disbelief in the existence outside Russia of any "good" Poles, desiring sincere collaboration with the Soviet Union.

What is at the sources of this attitude, which is found even in well-informed circles? Many talks with journalists and in both Embassies with people who have tried to fathom the depths of Soviet policy have produced roughly the following impression. One cannot apply generally accepted dimensions to Russia. It should be remembered that for many years Russia has developed in isolation, and that she has done this to a considerable extent under the cry of securing the system against enemies from the West. The people in general have for years made great sacrifices to assure themselves against an alien invader. The German invasion imposed new and extremely heavy experiences on them, and evoked an oversensitiveness on the question of security. Desire for security became a complex. It is primarily from this angle that Russia looks at the outside world, including Poland. She attentively watches even the slightest shadows, which appear to menace her future security, and tries to remove people and groups which cast these shadows. This was the general view, and it had the following conclusion: if Russia becomes completely sure of Poland as an element in her security, then many matters at issue between the two nations will be settled with ease. For many of them are not ends of Soviet policy, but means leading to that end, which is security, not overcast by even the slightest shadows.

The argument which meets this view is that Poland, which has through the centuries known more evil than good from her neighbours, and over whose land so many wars have raged, is warmly desirous of peace. Poland understands that one of the conditions of peace is close collaboration with Russia. But what would be the worth of a peace bought at the cost of losing the values which it was to secure? The thing dearest to Poland is independence. A nation which has already lost its independence so often is sensitive about everything which obscures it, and reacts in a hostile manner to anything which strikes at this independence. Such a blow is an imposition of an alien will on the nation, even if it be dressed in national costume and made to sound legitimate by the argument of security. Independence is vulnerable without security, but security is even more vulnerable when built on the ruins of independence. From such observations one gets the impression of a vicious circle, a chase after security which augments insecurity and a chase after shadows which makes the darkness more profound. There is no perpetuum mobile in nature, nor in politics. Chasing after shadows must have its limit. This may be the plunging of Poland into total eclipse, in which shadows vanish, or it may be the opposite road - dispelling the shadows by introducing the light of mutual understanding and confidence into Polish-Russian relations. Only this road leads to the goal.

It seemed that the Moscow talks would be an important step along this road. To bystanders it appeared that the twelve strokes which sounded on the Kremlin clock as the Premier left it after his first conversation with Marshal Stalin sounded the hour at which light would begin to spread in the sky. During this same talk it was said that in politics not declarations but facts count. What are the real facts about what is happening in Poland now? We postpone an answer to this.

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In Moscow one begins to think of the rest of the world as almost another world - rather unreal, and in any case far away. "Things are as they seem to us" - this is the principle on which points-of-view about the world seem to be formed in Poland. Formed as the press states. This even affects the views of foreigners to a certain degree, not to mention Soviet public opinion.

During our stay the press kept up its references to "reactionary Poles hostile to Russia". In Poland itself and particularly in London, Soviet propaganda has long followed the line of painting our enemies rather than friends, and it is hard to resist the impression that this has created an atmosphere of disbelief in the existence outside Russia of any "good" Poles, bearing sincere collaboration with the Soviet Union.

What is at the source of this attitude, which is found even in well-informed circles? Many talks with journalists and in both English and Polish who have tried to fathom the depths of Soviet policy have produced roughly the following impression. One cannot apply generally accepted dimensions to Russia. It should be remembered that for many years Russia has developed in isolation, and that she has gone this to a considerable extent under the eye of securing the system against enemies from the West. The people in general have for years made great sacrifices to ensure themselves against an alien invader. The German invasion imposed now and extremely heavy expenses on them, and a shock as over-sensitiveness on the question of security. Desires for security become a complex. It is particularly from this angle that the outside world, including Poland, has attentively followed the slightest shadows, which appear to menace our future security, and it has the following conclusion: This was the general view. It had the following consequences: If Russia becomes completely and of Poland as an element in her security, then many matters at issue between the two nations will be settled with ease. For many of them are not ends of Soviet policy, but means leading to that end, which is security, not overcast by even the slightest shadows.



The argument which meets this view is that Poland, which has through the centuries known more evil than good from her neighbours, and over whose land so many wars have raged, is naturally desirous of peace. Poland understands that one of the conditions of peace is close collaboration with Russia. But what would be the worth of a peace bought at the cost of losing the values which it was to secure? The thing dearest to Poland is independence. A nation which has already lost its independence so often is sensitive about everything which obscures it, and reacts in a hostile manner to anything which strikes at this independence. Such a glow is an indication of an alien will on the nation, even if it be dressed in national costumes and made to sound legitimate by the argument of security. Independence is a valuable security, but security is even more valuable when built on the ruins of independence. From such observations one gets the impression of a vicious circle, a chase after security which augments insecurity and a chase after shadow which makes the darkness more profound. There is no perpetuum mobile in nature, nor in politics. Chasing after shadows must have its limit. This may be the plunging of Poland into total darkness, in which shadows vanish, or it may be the opposite road - dispelling the shadows by introducing the light of mutual understanding and confidence into Polish-Russian relations. Only this road leads to the goal.

It seems that the Moscow talks would be an important step along this road. No bystanders it appeared that the five articles which appeared on the Russian side as the Premier left to enter his first conversation with Marshal Stalin sounded the hour at which light would begin to spread in the sky. During this time talk it was said that in politics not destinations but facts count. What are the real facts about what is happening in Poland now? We postpone an answer to this.

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